

American Political Parties
GOVT 238
Spring 2014
PAC 104
Monday and Wednesday
2:40-4:00 p.m.

Professor Logan Dancey

Office: PAC 102

Office hours: Tuesday, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. and by appointment

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Course Overview

America's two political parties are frequently blamed for the perceived dysfunctional state of modern American politics. Political scientists, however, typically celebrate parties as essential to democracy. Indeed, noted Wesleyan political scientist E.E. Schattschneider wrote in 1942, "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties." So what exactly is a political party? What role do parties play in democracy (and U.S. democracy specifically)? How have the parties changed over time? Why do they seem so ideologically polarized today? We will tackle all those questions (and more!) in this class.

We will start the course with a theoretical look at what parties are and what role they play in a representative democracy. We will then transition into understanding how the parties and their coalitions have changed over time. Next, we will examine party position change on specific issues. Finally, we will end with a look at why politics seems so ideologically polarized today.

Course Objectives

There are four main objectives to this course. By the end of the course you should be better able to:

1. Offer a theoretically grounded definition of a political party and explain what role parties play in a representative democracy.
2. Explain how the American political parties' coalitions, ideology, and issue positions have changed over time.
3. Explain some of the key underlying reasons why our politics seems so polarized today.
4. Conduct independent research related to modern American politics

Course Structure

This course will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. Students are expected to finish the required readings for each class session and come ready to engage in a critical discussion of the arguments and evidence presented in the readings. A few classes will be set aside for in-class

debates/discussions, which means those class periods will be largely devoted to student-led discussion. For more on these specific classes, see the class participation section of the assignments list and the course schedule.

Required Books

Brewer, Mark D. and Jeffrey M. Stonecash. 2009. *Dynamics of American Political Parties*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fiorina, Morris P., Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2010. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. New York: Longman.

Lee, Frances. 2009. *Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles, and Partisanship in the U.S. Senate*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Course Website

You can access the course website through moodle.wesleyan.edu. Please check the course website regularly (i.e. at least twice a week).

Assignments

Midterm #1 (22.5%): There will be an in-class (closed-note, closed-book) exam on March 5. It will cover the material up through Feb. 26.

Midterm #2 (22.5%) There will be a second in-class (closed-note, closed-book) exam on May 5. The exam will only cover the second half of the course (March 24-April 30).

Research Paper Final Draft (25%): A final research paper for this course is due **Wednesday, May 14 at 2 p.m.** The paper should be 12-15 pages in length with a mix of sources from class, outside academic research, and additional original research (e.g., party platforms, newspaper stories, congressional bills/speeches). I will distribute more guidelines later in the semester. You can choose to write the research paper on any topic related to American political parties (with my pre-approval), although you may also pick to write on one of the following two topics (which I will expand on in separate handouts): 1) An analysis of the party dynamics in a specific state or 2) The parties' position on a specific issue and how it has changed over time.

Research Paper Prospectus (10%): A research prospectus that describes your topic, methods, and a few key sources for the final paper will be **due April 10 at 5 p.m.** This will help ensure you get working on your research paper early and get feedback from me. I will grade this assignment as I would any piece of written work you hand in. More information will be provided in February.

Class Participation (10%): Class participation will make up 10% of your grade and is based on two factors. First, we will have four in-class debate/discussion days where the majority of the class will be driven by student discussion. On those days, you are expected to come to class with four bullet points in support of your position. You will hand in your typed bullet points as evidence of your preparation for the class debate/discussion. I will hand these back with an assessment of your preparation and participation that day.

Your general attendance, timeliness, and participation over the course of the semester make up the second part of your participation grade. You are expected to arrive all days on time and having done the reading. One or two missed classes over the course of the semester won't negatively affect your participation grade. Missing more than one or two classes, frequently arriving late, or a lack of thoughtful participation in class discussion will lower your participation grade.

Reading Response Posts (10%): You are responsible for submitting 10 short reading response posts to Moodle (e.g., 1-2 paragraphs) over the course of the semester. These should be **uploaded to Moodle by 1 p.m. the day of class. You can only do one per class. Days that you can post a response are marked with an asterisk (note there are 17 such days).** Response posts aren't accepted on in-class debate/discussion days since your typed bullet points count as your thoughts on the reading.

Good response posts will not just summarize an argument. Instead, they will *respond* to a particular aspect of the reading. A good response might do one of the following 1) Critique part of an author's argument; 2) Explain how some evidence from a previous reading supports or refutes an author's point; or 3) Explain how some contemporary aspect of party politics supports or refutes an author's point.

Key Dates

Feb. 10: In-class debate/discussion (bring typed bullet points)

Feb. 26: In-class debate/discussion (bring typed bullet points)

March 5: Midterm #1 in class

April 7: In-class debate/discussion (bring typed bullet points)

April 11: Research Paper Prospectus Due (by 5 p.m.)

April 30: In-class debate/discussion (bring typed bullet points)

May 5: Midterm #2 in class

May 14: Final Research Paper Due (by 2 p.m.)

Late Assignments

Late papers will lose 2/3 of a letter grade for each day that they are late (e.g., a B+ becomes a B-

if one day late). An assignment is considered one day late if it is submitted more than 10 minutes after the deadline. The assignment becomes two days late after 24 hours. Assignments over five days late will not be accepted. Exams must be taken during the time scheduled. Makeup exams will only be granted in rare cases (e.g., a documented medical emergency). You are also expected to show up the day of each in-class debate/discussion. You will only be excused from these days if you have a **documented** excuse (e.g., Wesleyan-sponsored event, family emergency, illness). In that case, you will be asked to write a short (i.e., 1-2 page paper) offering a position on the debate/discussion.

Contacting the Instructor

I encourage you to contact me with questions and concerns about the course content and assignments. Please refer to me as Professor Dancey in all correspondence. In general, if you have a clarification question you can reach me over e-mail or on my office phone. Questions about course material, grades, or how to structure your papers are best dealt with in office hours where we can have a more productive conversation than over e-mail. If my office hours do not work for you because of your class schedule, work schedule, or another important commitment, I am also available by appointment. I cannot guarantee that if you e-mail me shortly before an assignment is due that I will be able to answer your questions, so please make sure and e-mail me early if you have a time-specific question.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

Contested Grades

If you wish to contest a grade you must submit a written explanation of why you believe the grade is inaccurate within two weeks of getting the grade back. You must wait 24 hours from the time the assignment is returned before you submit the written explanation. I will not discuss grades until 24 hours after the assignment is passed back. If you ask me to reevaluate your grade then I reserve the right to either raise or lower your grade based on my reevaluation.

Technology in the Classroom

You may use laptops, iPads, etc. in class for note taking purposes only. Refrain from using these devices for Facebook, instant messenger, e-mail checking, or anything else that may distract you, your fellow students, or me. It is obvious when someone is using his or her laptop for non-class related activities. If you want to use a laptop in class, you should print out and sign the laptop policy statement on the course website. I will notify you if I believe you are using your laptop for non-class related activities. A second violation will result in a letter grade reduction in your participation grade and a request from me to stop bringing your laptop to class. If you bring your laptop to class after the second violation it will result in an 'F' for your participation grade.

Academic Integrity

I take plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct seriously. Please see this helpful website:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/plagiarism.html>

Suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Board. I expect students to follow the Wesleyan honor code, which can be found here:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/honorboard/honorcode.html>

Course Schedule:¹

Days noted with an asterisk (*) are days where you may post a reading response. There are 17 such days and you must complete 10 reading responses.

Part I. What is a party and what is it good for?

Jan. 27—Meet and Greet

Jan. 29— Perspectives on Parties*

- George Washington's Farewell Address. 1796. (Just focus on part on parties) http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp
- Federalist #10. http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_10.html
- Scattschneider, E.E. 1942. *Party Government*, chapters 1 & 8.
- McCarty, Nolan. 2013. "What We Know and Don't Know About Our Polarized Politics." *Washington Post (Monkey Cage Blog)*. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/01/08/what-we-know-and-dont-know-about-our-polarized-politics/>

Feb. 3—What is a Party?*

- Aldrich, John H. 2011. *Why Parties? A Second Look*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chapters 1-2.

Feb. 5—What is a Party, Day II*

- Bawn, Kathleen et al. 2012. "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands, and Nominations in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 10(3): 571-97.

Feb. 10—The Nature of the Two Parties (In class debate/discussion)

- Lowi, Theodore J. 1983. "Toward a More Responsible Three-Party System." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 16(4): 699-706.
- Stone, Walter J. and Ronald B. Rapoport. 2001. "It's Perot, Stupid! The Legacy of the 1992 Perot Movement in the Major-Party System, 1994-2000." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39(1): 49-58.
- Wheelan, Charles. 2013. "We Need a Toyota of American Politics." *U.S. News and World Report*, Nov. 4: <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/charles-wheelan/2013/11/04/why-the-us-needs-a-third-political-party>

¹ I reserve the right to make modifications to the course schedule during the semester. If I make changes I will both announce them in class and on the website.

- Masket, Seth and Hans Noel. 2011. "Don't Look to a Third-Party Candidate." *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 10: <http://articles.latimes.com/print/2011/aug/10/opinion/la-oe-masketnoel-indies-20110810>.

Feb. 12—Nominations/Activists*

- Masket, Seth E. 2009. *No Middle Ground: How Informal Party Organizations Control Nominations and Polarize Legislatures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Introduction & Chapter 4.
- Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2008. "Political Parties in Rough Weather." *The Forum* 5(4): Article 3.
- McCormick, John. 2012. "Blue and Red Don't Mix in Survey of Swing-State Delegates." *Bloomberg Politics*, Sep. 3: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-09-03/blue-and-red-don-t-mix-in-survey-of-swing-state-delegates.html>

Part II. Party Coalition Change

Feb. 17—Realignments*

- Sundquist, James L. 1983. *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States*. Chapters 1-2.
- Mayhew, David R. 2000. "Electoral Realignments." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3: 449-74.

Feb. 19—Party Coalition Change*

- Brewer, Mark D. and Jeffrey M. Stonecash. 2009. *Dynamics of American Political Parties*. Chapters 1, 2, 5, & 6.

Feb. 24—Party Coalition Change, Continued*

- Brewer, Mark D. and Jeffrey M. Stonecash. 2009. *Dynamics of American Political Parties*. Chapters 7-11.
- Klein, Ezra (interview with Theda Skocpol). 2013. "The Left Thinks Business Controls the Republican Party. They're Wrong." *Washington Post*, Oct. 8: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/10/08/the-left-thinks-business-controls-the-republican-party-theyre-wrong/>

Feb. 26—Party Change following the 2012 Election? (In class debate/discussion)

- Teixeira, Ruy and John Halpin. 2012. "The Obama Coalition in the 2012 Election and Beyond." Center for American Progress. <http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/ObamaCoalition-5.pdf>

- Rove, Karl. 2013. "More White Voters Alone Won't Save the GOP. To win the Presidency in 2016, the Party Needs to Do Better With Hispanics." *Wall Street Journal*, June 27: <http://www.rove.com/articles/480>
- Trende, Sean. 2013. "Demographics and the GOP, Part IV." Realclearpolitics.com. July 2: http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2013/07/02/demographics_and_the_gop_part_iv.html.
- Abramowitz, Alan I. and Ruy Teixeira. 2013. "Is Doubling Down on White Voters a Viable Strategy for the Republican Party?" July 11: <http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/is-doubling-down-on-white-voters-a-viable-strategy-for-the-republican-party/>

March 3—Guest speakers or movie

- Either speakers from local party organizations or movie

March 5

- Midterm

March 10—Spring Break

March 12—Spring Break

March 17—Spring Break

March 19—Spring Break

Part III. Party Position Change

March 24—Party Ideology*

- Geering, John. 1998. *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996*. Excerpt.
- Noel, Hans. 2012. "The Coalition Merchants: The Ideological Roots of the Civil Rights Realignment." *The Journal of Politics* 74(1): 156-73.
- Brooks, David. 2014. "Movement on the Right." *The New York Times*, Jan. 9: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/10/opinion/brooks-movement-on-the-right.html>

March 26—Issue Evolution*

- Carmines, Edward G. and Michael W. Wagner. 2006. "Political Issues and Party Alignments: Assessing the Issue Evolution Perspective." *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 67-81.

- Adams, Greg D. 1997. "Abortion: Evidence of an Issue Evolution." *American Journal of Political Science* 41(3): 718-737.

March 31—Party Issue Positions (Women’s Rights)*

- Wolbrecht, Christina. 2000. *The Politics of Women’s Rights*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, chapters 1-2.

April 2—Party Issue Positions (General Theory and Race Case Study)*

- Karol, David. 2009. *Party Position Change in American Politics: Coalition Management*. New York: Cambridge University Press, chapters 1 & 5.

Part IV. Party Polarization and the Tripartite Classification

April 7—Machines as Party Organizations (In class debate/discussion)

- Excerpts from *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*.
- Gollway, Terry. 2014. "The Forgotten Virtues of Tammany Hall." *The New York Times*, Jan. 18: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/18/opinion/the-forgotten-virtues-of-tammany-hall.html>
- Royko, Mike. 1971. *Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago*. E.P. Dutton: New York. Excerpt.

April 9—Contemporary Party Structures and Alternative Organizations*

- Koger, Gregory, Seth Masket, and Hans Noel. 2009. "Partisan Webs: Information Exchange and Party Networks." *British Journal of Political Science* 39: 633-653.
- La Raja, Raymond. 2013. "Why Super PACs: How the American Party System Outgrew the Campaign Finance System." *The Forum* 10(4): 91-104.
- Confessore, Nicholas. 2014. "Biggest Liberal 'Super PAC' to Fund Possible Clinton Bid." *New York Times*, Jan. 23: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/24/us/politics/biggest-liberal-super-pac-to-fund-possible-clinton-bid.html?hp>

April 11—Research Paper Prospectus Due by 5 p.m.

April 14—Parties in Government: Polarization in Congress*

- McCarty, Nolan, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Richer*, pp. 1-23.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2013. "Partisan Polarization in American Politics: A Background Paper." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43(4): 688-708.

April 16—Parties in Government: Partisan Teamsmanship in Congress*

- Lee, *Beyond Ideology*, chapters 1-3.

April 21—Parties in Government: Partisan Teamsmanship in Congress*

- Lee, *Beyond Ideology*, chapters 6-8.

April 23—Presidents and Partisanship*

- Lee, *Beyond Ideology*, chapter 4.
- Edwards, George C. 2012. *Overreach: Leadership in the Obama Presidency*. Excerpt.

April 28—A Polarized Public? Day 1*

- Fiorina, Morris. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*.

April 30—A Polarized Public? Day 2 (In Class Debate/Discussion)

- Abramowitz, Alan and Kyle Saunders. 2008. "Is Polarization a Myth?" *Journal of Politics*. 70: 542-55.
- Fiorina, Morris P., Samuel Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2008. "Polarization in the American Public: Misconceptions and Misreadings." *Journal of Politics* 70: 556-60.
- Carsey, Thomas and Geoffrey Layman. 2013. "Our Politics is Polarized on More Issues than Ever Before." *Washington Post (Monkey Cage Blog)*, Jan 17: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/01/17/our-politics-is-polarized-on-more-issues-than-ever-before/>

May 5—Midterm #2

May 7—Temporary Readings TBD

Wednesday, May 14—Final Paper Due